



Vegetarian Eating: Fact vs. Fiction

“It is the position of the American Dietetic Association and Dietitians of Canada that appropriately planned vegetarian diets are healthful, nutritionally adequate and provide health benefits in the prevention and treatment of certain diseases.”

- MYTH:** Vegetarianism is just a fad that will pass in a few years.
FACT: Most people throughout world history have eaten a largely vegetarian diet. Relatively recently, in Europe and North America, where meat and animal products have become affordable, diets centered around meats have become widespread. In other parts of the world, plant-based diets remain more common.
- MYTH:** A vegetarian diet is too strict and limiting. It would be too hard to follow.
FACT: There are many different types of vegetarian diets. A lacto-ovo vegetarian avoids meat, fish and poultry but may eat eggs and dairy products. A lacto-vegetarian will avoid meat, fish, and poultry but will eat milk, cheese and dairy. They will avoid eggs or derivatives of eggs. Vegans are strict vegetarians who avoid all animal products.
- MYTH:** Vegetarians need to take vitamin or mineral supplements.
FACT: Most healthy vegetarians don't need to take supplements although there may be exceptions. Someone switching to a vegetarian diet should meet with a registered dietitian to be sure that all necessary vitamins and minerals are being consumed from food sources.
- MYTH:** Vegetarian diets are lacking in protein.
FACT: Many plant-based foods contain protein. Grain foods, such as bread, cereal, pasta and rice, or nuts, beans and tofu are just a few vegetable-based foods that contain protein.
- MYTH:** Vegetarians don't get enough calcium in their diet.
FACT: Vegetarians who don't eat dairy products can obtain calcium from green, leafy vegetables such as spinach and collard greens and foods fortified with calcium.
- MYTH:** Children and pregnant women should not follow a vegetarian or vegan diet.
FACT: A healthy vegan/vegetarian diet is safe for both children and pregnant women. Consult with a registered dietitian to be sure your food choices provide the necessary amounts of calories, protein, vitamins and minerals for healthy growing bodies.

NUTRITION: IT'S A MATTER OF FACT

National Nutrition Month[®] is a nutrition education and information campaign created by the American Dietetic Association. The campaign is designed to focus attention on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits. National Nutrition Month also promotes ADA and its members to the public and the media as the most valuable and credible source of timely, scientifically based food and nutrition information.



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